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ABSTRACT

The 1973 and 1979 editions of "Literature by and about the American Indian," published by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), are examined in this paper for titles by native American writers that are appropriate for junior high and high school students. A few of the books recommended in the NCTE publications remain out of print, and while many of the other titles are highly recommended, they either are written by Anglo writers or are autobiographies as told to an Anglo writer. Many of the titles cited are briefly summarized, and the paper concludes with a bibliography of works by native American authors only. (HTH)

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Anna Lee Stensland

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Integrity in Teaching Native American Literature

Anna Lee Stensland

In 1973, when the first edition of Literature by and about the American Indian was published by NCTE, all of us were hard pressed to find books for either the junior or senior high school, but especially for the junior high, which were written by Native Americans. In that edition, among the novels about Indians for the junior high school, only D'Arcy McNickle's Runner in the Sun was authored by a Native American writer, and at the time it was out of print. For senior high students we had a few more books: Dallas Chief Eagle's Winter Count, N. Scott Momaday's House Made of Dawn, Hymeyost Storm's Seven Arrows and Frank Water's The Man Who Killed the Deer. For the junior high, among the biography and autobiography, we found Kay Bennett's Kaibah, out of print, and Charles Eastman's Indian Boyhood. For the senior high we had Denton Bedford's Tsali, Francis LaFlesche's The Middle Five, Emerson Blackhorse Mitchell's Miracle Hill, Luther Standing Bear's Land of the Spotted Eagle and My People, the Sioux, and George Webb's A Pima Remembers. In addition, there were a score or more of the "as told to" autobiographies, which I am not here including as Indian, because we're never quite certain about the extent of the editor's or recorder's interference. The result was that many books about Indians written by white people were recommended for high school teachers who wanted some study of America's first settlers. Popularly recommended were Conrad Richter's Light in the Forest, Hal Borland's When the Legends Die, Arthur Kopit's play Indians, Edwin Corle's Fig Tree John, and John Neihardt's Black Elk Speaks. All of these are fine works, but they are not Native American Literature. If you or I, American-born, happened to write a novel set in England about English people, would anyone call it British literature? Yet for a time, it was necessary to use the best books by white authors to show young people what it was to be Native American. This is no longer true.

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The second edition of Literature by and about the American Indian, published in 1979, shows a growing number of fine writers who are Native American writing for junior high school students, as well as those writing books appropriate for senior high or adult readers.

Among some of the highly respectable books for junior high school are D'Arcy McNickle's Runner in the Sun, still out of print, the story of a young cliff dwelling Indian who in the midst of intrigue on his pueblo, is sent to the Land of Fable (Mexico) to get a strain of stronger corn. One of the very finest novels available, if a teacher wants to take the time with students to study the mythological backgrounds, is Jamake Highwater's Anpao: an American Indian Odyssey, the story of a kind of Indian Ulysses who in order to win the hand of his loved one makes a journey to the Sun to get permission to marry. Another novel is Janet Campbell Hale's The Owl's Song, about a fourteen-year-old boy from her own Coeur d'Alene tribe who fights discrimination in a California high school in a struggle to remain Indian.

Added to the previously mentioned autobiographies for junior high school -- Kay Bennett's Kaibah: Recollections of a Navajo Girlhood, still out of print, and Charles Eastman's Indian Boyhood -- we now have Forest Carter's The Education of LittleFree, a sensitively-written story of the boyhood of the author of Gone to Texas and The Vengeance of Josey Wales, about that period when he lived with his Cherokee grandparents in Tennessee.

For senior high school students and adults we now have a trio of outstanding novels -- Momaday's House Made of Dawn; Welch's Winter in the Blood, the story of the unnamed, lame narrator, a picture of loneliness and aimlessness on and near a reservation; and Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony, the story of a young Laguna World War II veteran who

who returns to his reservation to try to find home and acceptance. In addition to these, are D'Arcy McNickle's The Surrounded, which is now back in print, and his latest novel, published posthumously, Wind from an Enemy Sky -- a story of the misunderstanding among three very decent people: Bull, the leader of his conservative Little Elk Indians; his brother, Henry Jim, who left his tribe to live the white man's way; and Adam Pell, engineer and builder of a dam and a museum curator -- and James Welch's most recent novel, The Death of Jim Loney, in which a halfbreed tumbles rapidly into insanity trying to figure out what his roots are. Perhaps for students who want to do further reading, the teacher might suggest Hyemeyohets Storm's Seven Arrows, a book which has been both praised and condemned by Indian reviewers, Nasnaga's (Roger Russell) Indian Summer, an interesting but not outstanding book, and Frank Water's novel, The Man Who Killed the Deer, which is very worthwhile. Among autobiographies, excluding those which are told to someone else or edited, we have Charles Eastman's story of his education, From the Deep Woods to Civilization, Francis LaFlesche's The Middle Five, Momaday's The Names, John Roger's Red World and White: Memories of a Chippewa Boyhood, Luther Standing Bear's two books, My People, the Sioux and Land of the Spotted Eagle, George Webb's A Pima Remembers, and one by the Canadian metis, Maria Campbell, Halfbreed.

When we look at the practical problem of the availability of these texts, however, we come face to face with the problem which teachers of Native American literature share with Indian writers: that of getting books published at all and an even greater problem, that of getting a book into paperback. Too often a Native American author must turn to unknown publishing houses in strange locations to get his manuscript out. When Dallas Chief Eagle approached an eastern publishing company with his Winter Count, he was asked to change an incident involving General Custer. When he refused to, he had to turn to Denton-Birkland in Colorado Springs, Colorado, a little-known publisher. D'Arcy

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McNickle commented to Charles Larson, author of American Indian Fiction about The Surrounded, published by Dodd, Mead in 1936: "The Surrounded made no money, of course, in spite of some excellent reviews...." [p. 3] It was finally reissued after McNickle's death in 1978, but his Runner in the Sun, so good for the junior high, remains out of print.

For the junior high, then, the best books, which are also available in paperback, are Jamake Highwater's Anpao, Charles Eastman's Indian Boyhood, Forrest Carter's The Education of Little Tree, and Janet Campbell Hale's The Owl's Song, with supplementary readings in Indian myths and poetry. For the senior high we have somewhat more choice: Momaday's House Made of Dawn, and The Names, James Welch's Winter in the Blood, Silko's Ceremony, D'Arcy McNickle's The Surrounded, and Frank Water's The Man Who Killed the Deer. Two new books which, hopefully, will soon be in paperback are Welch's The Death of Jim Loney and McNickle's Wind from an Enemy Sky.

The Light in the Forest, When the Legends Die, Fig Tree John, and Black Elk Speaks are fine works in their own right, but they should not be called Native American literature.

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Books by Native American Authors for Possible Use in the
Junior and Senior High School

Bedford, Denton R. Tsali. Indian Historian Press, 1972

The story of the Cherokee hero who resisted Removal, written by a Minsee Indian. Paper, \$6.00.

Bennett, Kay. Kaibah: Recollections of a Navajo Girlhood. Westernlore, 1964.

The autobiography of a Navajo girl growing up between 1928 and 1935. OP

Campbell, Maria. Halfbreed. E. P. Dutton, 1973.

The struggles of a part Cree Indian and part Scotch girl and her family in northern Canada. OP

Carter, Forrest. The Education of Little Tree. Delacorte, 1976.

The author of Gone to Texas and The Vengeance Trail of Josey Wales tells of his boyhood growing up with his Cherokee grandparents in their Tennessee log cabin. Paper, Dell, \$1.50.

Chief Eagle, Dallas. Winter Count. Golden Bell, 1968.

An historical novel of the Teton Sioux from about 1868 when white men were beginning to enter the Black Hills for gold until the Massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890. OP

Eastman, Charles. Indian Boyhood. Dover, 1971.

The author tells of his life growing up in the Santee Sioux tribe following the Minnesota Sioux Uprising in 1868. Paper, \$3.00.

_____. From the Deep Woods to Civilization. Little Brown, 1961.

The story of the education of Eastman from the Santee Sioux Indian School to Beloit Academy to Knox Academy to Dartmouth College and finally to the University of Boston Medical School. Paper, University of Nebraska, \$3.75.

Hale, Janet Campbell. The Owl's Song. Avon, 1976.

A member of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe has written the fictionalized account of Billy White Hawk who leaves the reservation to go to high school in California and finds he must fight discrimination. Paper, \$1.25.

Highwater, Jamake. Anpao: An American Indian Odyssey. Lippincott, 1977.

Anpao, a brave young man in love, agrees to a journey to the Sun to ask permission to marry. Paper, Odyssey, \$3.95.

LaFlesche, Francis. The Middle Five: Indian Schoolboys of the Omaha Tribe. University of Wisconsin Press, 1963.

The author pictures the life in a Presbyterian Indian mission school near Omaha in the last half of the nineteenth century. Paper, University of Nebraska, \$2.95.

McNickle, D'Arcy. Runner in the Sun: A Story of Indian Maize. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1954.

Salt, a young cliff-dwelling Indian of the Southwest before the days of the white settlers, agrees to go to the Land of Fable (Mexico) to obtain a more vigorous strain of corn. OP

- _____. The Surrounded. University of New Mexico Press, 1978.
Archilde Leon, half Indian and half Spanish, returns to his father's ranch after having been away for a year and becomes entangled in the problems of his troubled family. Paper, \$5.95.
- _____. Wind from an Enemy Sky. Harper and Row, 1978.
Bull, the conservative leader of the Little Elk Indians, his brother Henry Jim, who has accepted the white man's way, and Adam Pell, engineer and museum curator, become embroiled in a disagreement over a dam, which leads to misunderstanding and tragedy.
- Mitchell, Emerson Blackhorse. Miracle Hill: The Story of a Navaho Boy. University of Oklahoma Press, 1967.
In autobiographical fiction, Mitchell uses the character Broneco, a young Navaho, to describe his own life from birth in a hogan to his coming of age, including his curiosity about the white world and his attempts to become part of it. Paper, \$5.95.
- Momaday, N. Scott. The House Made of Dawn. New American Library, 1969.
A Pulitzer Prize novel covering the years 1945 to 1952 in the life of Abel, a World War II veteran who returns home to his Jemez Reservation. Paper, Harper Row, \$1.95.
- _____. The Names: a Memoir. Harper Row, 1976.
Momaday's story of growing up in his part Kiowa and part Cherokee-Scotch family, much of the time on the Jemez Reservation, where his parents taught school. Paper, \$4.95.
- Nasnaga. Indians' Summer. Harper Row, 1975.
During the bicentennial celebration in the United States, a coalition of Indian tribes declares war on the United States.
- Rogers, John. Red World and White: Memories of a Chippewa Boyhood. University of Oklahoma Press, 1974.
The boyhood of Way Quauh Gishig from 1896 when at six he went to school in Flandreau, South Dakota, through a period when he returned to his mother's wigwam near Mahnomen, Minnesota, until he made contact with his father at Cass Lake, Minnesota.
- Silko, Leslie Marmon. Ceremony. Viking Press, 1977.
Tayo, a young half-breed from the Laguna Reservation, returns home after imprisonment by the Japanese to try to establish a place for himself. Paper, NAL, \$2.25.
- Standing Bear, Luther. Land of the Spotted Eagle. Houghton Mifflin, 1933.
The Lakota chief, Standing Bear, tells how he was raised in ancient tribal ways and finally was sent to the Carlisle School to be educated. Paper, University of Nebraska Press, \$3.95.
- _____. My People, the Sioux. Houghton Mifflin, 1928.
The Lakota chief describes his experiences during the Battle of Wounded Knee and later his marriage and his work for the advancement of his people. Paper, University of Nebraska Press, \$3.95.

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Storm, Hyemeyohsts. Seven Arrows. Harper Row, 1972.

A novel about a number of people of the Cheyenne tribe who lived during the last century, interwoven with teaching stories, legends and allegories of the tribe.

Waters, Frank. The Man Who Killed the Deer. Paperbooks, 1971.

A novel about Martiniano, part Pueblo and part Apache, who is an outcast with his people because he has been forced to attend government schools and no longer follows the old ceremonialism. Paper, \$1.50.

Webb, George. A Pima Remembers. University of Arizona Press, 1959.

A Pima who was born in 1893, graduated from an Indian Bureau school, worked as a ranch hand and farm overseer, and finally was elected to his tribe's first council. Paper, \$3.95.

Welch, James. Winter in the Blood. Harper Row, 1974.

The unnamed narrator, a Montana Blackfeet, tells of his life and its hopelessness near a reservation. Paper, \$2.25.

_____. The Death of Jim Loney. Harper Row, 1979.

Jim Loney, a halfbreed who is engaged in a struggle to find out who he is, becomes more and more alienated and disillusioned, finally ending his life in tragedy.